

## PORTRAIT OF A FRETILIN WOMAN IN TANGERANG PRISON

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People of the same flesh/and blood are being separated, a pretty, cute little girl who has become the child of all political prisoners in Tangerang Women's Prison is soon to be taken away. One after the other, the prisoners embrace the child and kiss her cheeks while the child is too small to understand why she must leave her own devoted mother and all these warm-hearted aunties. The tears flow from these women, political fighters who have experienced so much suffering, and these tears moisten the cheeks of the infant.

This drama was played out in front of the main gate of Tangerang Women's Prison, a drama needing no flowery words to highlight its moving impact. Living reality is far stronger than any dramatised impressions, a separation forced and enforced by those in power, the ones who are always grabbing like some giant monster, blinded and heartless. Dominggas da Costa and Luisa Maria Peres, mother and child, are being separated, taking leave of each other in a deeply moving scene.

The child is now in safe hands; thanks to the help of the Red Cross, she has returned to Dili where her grandparents are taking care of her. Dominggas must wait a few more years until her sentence has been served, knowing, as all the political prisoners know, that when you are once in prison you must stop dreaming that you will be released tomorrow or the next day, though release will surely come in the end. And struggle itself knows no spacial or time boundaries, for even in prison, every move and step we take is a political act. Helped on by elder women with their own political experience, Dominggas will certainly mature to continue the struggle. Fretilin is still very much alive.

She is of light build, as slender as an athlete and still quite young. She will be 27 on 2 August. Dominggas da Costa also known as Coellio was born in Dili, East Timor. Her address: Manleuada RT.III/RK. V, No 32, Bairro Pite village, East Dili, Dili Town. While she was still at school in the first grade of lower secondary school, she became an active member of Fretilin. She finished secondary school and much later was to become a school teacher at Primary School No 12 in Dili, from 1980 to September 1982. She got married in 1981 and gave birth to a child, but the marriage did not last and she divorced in 1982.

She was only 16 years old when Indonesian troops attacked East Timor. Like many thousands of boys and girls, she had to abandon her school and went, together with Fretilin troops into the bush. She went not alone but with her whole family who retreated to the countryside to continue the guerrilla war, together with the Fretilin Dili leadership and the central leadership which is still carrying out the struggle in the bush, up to the present day.

In 1980, the opportunity arose for her to return to the town. She took advantage of this and succeeded in winning the confidence of the camat to get a job assisting the population census. Then she got a job as a teacher at Primary School No 12 and it was when she was still working as a teacher that she was arrested. She was arrested on 2 September 1982 by the Indonesian Army but was not tried until January 1984 by the Dili District Court, and then held in Comarca Prison, Dili. On 17 May, 1984, she was transferred to the women's prison in Tangerang where she is still being held.

Dominggas received her political education in the course of direct practical experience, and from that political experience she developed her conviction that independence is the most cherished possession of any nation. She learnt that freedom is the most basic right, which is why Portuguese colonial had to be swept away, the white people's power that had brought pain and hardship to the people of East Timor. Inspired by the burning spirit of independence already at an early age, she threw herself into mobilising the women of Dili, helping with logistics and finally withdrew to the bush.

The Indonesian Army enjoyed great superiority of weapons and tactical capability, its men injected with venom while Fretilin was still raw and immature. The Portuguese had done nothing for their colonial subjects and had left them in a state of total neglect. Then, the tactics of struggle were changed and Dominggas

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returned to enemy territory to work in the ranks of the enemy as a school teacher. But Indonesian intelligence was well trained, had plenty of experience and succeeded in carrying out an effective territorial consolidation. As a result, many cells working in the town were exposed and rounded up.

Maturing in the course of struggle is the fastest way of growing. This young girl of 16 took up arms, became an organiser of women, learnt to smuggle and to do other things, to fight a cruel and vicious army, the best army in South-East Asia. At such an early age, she was taking care of logistics and carrying out other duties in face of death. In Jakarta, 16-year old girls spend their time at the disco, and wander in the dead of night around cemeteries (areas of prostitution, Tr.) because they no longer are inspired by the spirit of a noble struggle.

These heroic stories of the Fretilin fighters will become a treasure of human stories of people longing for freedom, a portrait of a people fighting for the aspirations and self-determination of the people of East Timor. It is our duty and responsibility to gather together these stories, also as a source of information about the real situation in the field of battle. The 42 people now incarcerated in Jakarta prisons have a great deal to tell; they are gripping stories, stories of great benefit to those who want to uphold justice and freedom.

I attach one photograph. I only have one print so please reproduce it and send it to Tapol.